(e) whether the major political parties and the representative bodies of Indian Industries and Commerce would be consulted with regard to the provisions of the amended Product Patents Bill; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) to (f) In accordance with the obligations contained in the agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), India is required to amend the Patents Act, 1970 by 31 December, 1999 in respect of scope of patentable inventions, providing for exclusions from patentability, providing a uniform term of patent protection of 20 years, alignment of compulsory licensing provisions, etc. An additional period of five years, that is, till 31 December, 2004 is also available for extending product patent protection to areas of technology not protected so far. This would mainly be in the areas of pharmaceuticals and agricultural chemicals.

Government has maintained a close interface with individuals organisations and interest groups concerned and has also organised a series of Interactive Sessions on 'Approaches to the Indian Patent Law' in different cities of country between 28 June, 1999 to 9 August, 1999.

Factors affecting country's export

1882. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE & INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that poor infrastructure and procedural bottlenecks are some of the factors which adversely affected our country's exports; and

(b) if so, what are the steps Government propose to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (b) Exports from India (in US $ terms) during the period April—October, 1999-2000 compared to corresponding period in 1998-99 have shown a growth of 10.02%. However, the Government has been receiving representations from various trade bodies on the infrastructure constraints and need for

procedural simplifications and has taken steps to remove such constraints.

It is the endeavour of the Government to take concerted measures to remove infrastructure constraints at ports, airports and other handling points. Various measures have been taken to simplify the procedures related to movement of cargo, reduce the dwell time, rationalise handling costs and bring greater efficiency at ports/ airports and other handling points. Inland Container Depots (ICDs) and Container Freight Stations (CFSs) are being established in various parts of the country to facilitate container transportation of goods and intermodal conveyance. Private initiative is being harnessed in creating infrastructure at ports, airports, in upgrading highway and in setting up of ICDs/CFSs, warehouses, etc.

Special attention has also been accorded to implement the Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) at Ports/Airports/ICDs to cut down multiplicity of documents. The Department of Revenue has taken measures to facilitate faster movement and clearance of goods. Important measures, inter-alia, include simplification of transhipment rules, coastal shipping, bonded trucking, rational measures for speedy clearance of export-import goods and extended coverage of different export related schemes at various ports of registration.

Use of expertise in knowledge based industries

1883. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether India can use its expertise in knowldge-based industries to become a top trading partner of the West in the new millennium, cancelling out the advantage which China gained in the closing Century with its manufacturing strength, as reported in the Hindustan Times, dated 2nd December, 1999; and

(b) in what manner India can be the services hub of the world and also be the Central place from which knowledge industries can generate and flourish, like China; and

(c) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) India has the advantage of vast pool of skilled and technically trained man-power for promoting